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best through it may we keep fine-tempered and resilient our American tongue.

One word I would add in closing. There is a sorry *ad prejudiciam* fallacy in the description of Latin as 'dead'. Languages which have great thoughts expressed in them do not die, and Latin has had two great periods, the Classical and the Mediaeval, when it was the vehicle of great thoughts<sup>3</sup>. Its lives, indeed, are as many as the wide human interests which its letters have touched, and law, politics, and religion are but a few of its vivifications. Even Latin teachers sometimes overlook the range and currency of their subject's vitality; and this, I fear, is a fault; for at least in their day the life of the language is in their hands; it is through them that Latin lives.

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA HARTLEY BURR ALEXANDER

### PROFESSOR ALEXANDER'S LETTERS TO TEACHERS

Professor Alexander is head of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Nebraska. In *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 7. 33-35 I printed an abstract, with comments, of an article by him, entitled *Youth and the Classics*, which appeared in the *Nebraska State Journal*, September 17, 1913. In 1919, Dr. Alexander published, through The Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago, a volume entitled *Letters to Teachers and Other Papers of the Hour* (pages vii + 256). Parts of this book are distinctly of interest and profit to teachers of the Classics. One of the letters bears the caption *The Humanities* (55-63). In Part II, Dr. Alexander discusses *Foreign Language Study* (169-189). He would himself have foreign languages studied because they minister so decidedly to education. There are two kinds of knowledge—knowledge of men and knowledge of nature, or, to put it differently, knowledge of human thought, and knowledge of the human environment. For knowledge of men we must turn, he says, to the humanities. The humanities mean a knowledge of books. The Liberal College aims, or tries to aim, to open up the privilege of books, not of any and every book, but of the best books. Here it is worth while to quote Dr. Alexander's exact words (173-175):

... Many of these (and may the praise of posterity long be to their makers!) are in the English tongue, by right of creation; but many more are in other languages, languages which must be learned—*partially*, as languages are always learned—in order that they may be partially understood. I know, of course, that the English-speaking world is now rich in translations of foreign masterpieces, and many of them superb translations; and I know that a very great treasure may be derived from the study of these works in translation: if any question this, one need but mention King James's Version, and he is answered. But it is also true, as everyone who has ever really caught the spirit of a foreign tongue will attest, that at the best a translation is but a pale reflection of its original; or if (as at times happens) it better the original, it is essentially another

work. It is hard to say this convincingly; but if we accept Lord Bryce's criterion, that the best judge is the man who has first made the acquaintance of a work in translation and has afterwards learned to know it in the original, we shall discover that the testimony to the worth of the effort is virtually unanimous.

Nor should it be necessary to repeat the obvious in saying that we do not make acquaintance with the ideas expressed in a foreign tongue merely for their formal (or, as a scholastic might say it, their intellectual) value; the power of a conception comes from the vigor of the context in which it is set, and a main part of that context is inevitably conveyed by the color of its native dialect. Philosophy, because it seeks the universal, should suffer less than other types of literature from this defect; but even in Jowett's splendid English something of his natural glory is faded from Plato.

It is for the sake of literature, and knowledge of literature, that we encourage the study of foreign languages as an essential part of a humanistic education; nor has the study any other justification besides knowledge of literature which will perpetuate it beyond the bare limits of practical necessity. But it needs no other. Literature—imaginative, political, historical, philosophical—is a thing of such supreme importance to civilization that every effort and every premium we can give to the cultivation of its tradition is but small measure of its value; and I mean by this value, not merely its return to the individual who acquires the knowledge, but its far richer returns to the whole society in which that individual lives. Colleges exist for the training of literate citizens, for the reason that literate citizens are indispensable to the good state.

Having thus considered in its general aspect the question of foreign language study in the Schools and Colleges, Dr. Alexander then proceeds, on pages 176-189, to consider "what languages are most economical, yielding the surest return for the effort expended. . .". Of the foreign languages, he puts Latin first. For this he advances several reasons:

... it is certainly easier to get effective preparatory teaching in Latin than in modern languages. . . . a small acquaintance with Latin is of more general value than is a small acquaintance with any other language. . . so that, on the whole, if but a single year could be devoted to language study Latin by all means is the language to recommend. . . . No sane critic will deny that for aesthetic and philosophical value alone no literature equals the Greek; nor will any sound critic question the fact that Latin owns a similar primacy in the domain of history and politics, while it may be regarded as a strong rival for the second place with respect to artistic and philosophical significance. It is probable that even now there are more books and documents in Latin than in any other language, taking the world over; and Latin possesses the unique value of opening to the student two of the greatest periods of human history—the period of pagan and imperial Rome and the great period of mediaeval Christianity.

C. K.

### BOETHIUS'S CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH LITERATURE DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Scholars who are familiar with Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* well know its importance in the world's literature during both the earlier and the later Middle Ages. In King Alfred, Boethius found a sympathetic interpreter and an ardent admirer. The

<sup>3</sup>On this theme reference may be made to a summary, with comments, *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 5.33-34, 41-42, of a paper by Professor J. P. Postgate, *Dead Language and Dead Languages*. c. x.